



# Etz Chaim

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The Quarterly Journal of the  
**JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF GREATER ORLANDO**

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## UPCOMING EVENTS IN THE GENEALOGICAL CALENDAR

- SUNDAY, OCT. 19, 1997** "Orlando: the History of its Jewish Community," — Joe Wittenstein, guest speaker, the first Jewish boy born in Orlando, recipient of the Jerome Bornstein Memorial Senior Leadership Award and many, many others. Don't miss this outstanding regular meeting. Bring a guest or two. Refreshments will be served.  
**Holocaust Center**  
1:30 p.m.
- TUESDAY, NOV. 11, 1997** "Ask the Experts," a panel presentation on Jewish genealogy by some of the more experienced members of our Society, explaining how you can be successful in your genealogical pursuits. Come early, bring a guest. And there will be refreshments.  
**JCC Senior Lounge**  
7:30 p.m.
- SUNDAY, DEC. 7, 1997** **ChanukArts Festival.** Our Society will have one or two tables with a display and answering questions about Jewish genealogy to all who are interested. Join in the fun, help man the booth.  
**JCC Gymnasium**  
Noon to 5 p.m.
- TUESDAY, DEC 9, 1997** "A Rabbinical Approach to Genealogy," Rabbi Merrill Shapiro, guest speaker. You won't want to miss this new insight presented by one of our most learned teachers. Bring a friend. Refreshments? Of course!  
**JCC Senior Lounge**  
7:30 p.m.
- SUNDAY, JAN. 18, 1998** "The Pleasures and Pitfalls of a Professional Genealogist," Harvey E. Morse and Corey A. Mead of International Genealogic Research, South Daytona Beach. Interesting? You bet! Come early and do research in the library. Bring a guest. Refreshments will be served.  
**Holocaust Center**  
1:30 p.m.

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**Etz Chaim** is free to all members of JGSGO. Back copies may be obtained for \$5.00 each. Regular membership dues (Sept. To Aug.) are \$20 per year for JCC members, \$25 for non-members. Out-of-town membership (more than 50 miles) is \$15 per year. Please make checks payable to JGSGO and mail to JGSGO, PO Box 941332, Maitland, FL 32794.

JGSGO meetings are held monthly, year round, usually on the 2nd Tuesday of each month, at 7:30 p.m. in the Senior Lounge of the JCC, 851 N. Maitland Ave., Maitland. Four Sunday meetings are held during the course of the year, usually in the Assembly Room of the Holocaust Memorial Research and Education Center, also on the Jewish campus at 851 N. Maitland Ave., Maitland, FL..



## *From the President . . .*

It's time to renew your membership ... and perhaps time to become more active in the JGSGO. With our meetings schedules for the second Tuesday of the month and three on the third Sunday, we look forward to greeting you. Our program committee makes every attempt to offer diversified sessions related to genealogy. Our meetings also offer you an opportunity to seek assistance on your particular genealogical search. It's also a good time to hear what others are doing and to share in their successes. Yes, we need dues-paying members, but we hope you can take advantage of the social interaction one gets at a meeting.

With a quarter of our program year complete, we have had several interesting meetings and are looking forward to the next segment. Our Sunday meeting on October 19 features Joe Wittenstein, an early "pioneer" and leader of the Jewish community in the Orlando area. He will give us a history of how the community developed since the early '40s. Since this is a Sunday afternoon (1:30 p.m.) meeting at the Holocaust Center, bring a friend to enjoy an interesting hour or so with other members of the JGSGO. Refreshments will be served.

Take advantage of our growing library located in the Holocaust Center. If you need something special, check with Gladys Paulin, our librarian. If you are on the Internet, contact Gladys at <GP21603@pagasus.cc.ucf.edu>.

This issue of ETZ CHAIM is the last one for Gene Starn, our erstwhile founder and editor. He moves on to other pursuits in the field of genealogy and to other areas. I will be naming a new editor soon who will be wanting material to share in future issues.

And if you have any ideas on how to improve our Society, contact me at <ptjay@aol.com> or through our JGSGO mailbox, P.O. Box 941332, Maitland, FL, 32794.

*Jay Schleichkorn*

# THE MANY NAMES OF MY FATHER AND HOW HE CAME TO AMERICA

By Marshall S. Frenkel

There was never any doubt to my sister and I as to what his name really was. To us he was just "Dad". During his lifetime, however, he was known as "Avrum Aaron", "Lonya", "Leonardo" and Harry (or 'arry).

These are the stories of his many names as he made his way to America.

## AVRUM AARON

His birth date was easy to remember, five aces (1/11/11). That was when he first saw the light of day in the shtetl of Ruzhin, Kiev Gubernia in the home of his mother's parents. She had come to them for her lying-in from Berdichev where she, Pessya, her husband, Moisei, and her two step-sons, Shura and Nahum, shared a finer home. Eight days later, there was, of course, a bris performed by —now, remember this name: Moisei Behr Schupak.

Within his immediate family group, he was called Aaron and, as his speaking capacity corrupted it, he would refer to himself as Alyon which his Ukrainian nanny further corrupted to Lonya, a perfectly acceptable nickname if his name had been Leonid.

His older brothers and his parents doted on him. Shura, then eight years old, taught him to wash himself at the basin while Nahum, four years old, kept him entertained. Lonya's memories of Berdichev were very happy ones with the single exception of his father's prolonged absences. Moisei was the owner of a sawmill where roofing shingles and parquet flooring were made. The sawmill was located in Pedagorka and later in Szumsk near Zhitomir.

When Moisei, with his handlebar mustache, came home for weekends, strolling up the walk to the house with his silver-headed walking stick, his arms full of gifts for everyone, he was an imposing figure!

## LONYA-

He was put into school at about three-and-a-half to learn Hebrew, Russian, Ukrainian, Yiddish and — to refine a favorite subject — mischief! He and his best friend, Buzi Rotstein, despite their affection and admiration for the teacher, still would cut the buttons off the center vent of his frock coat whenever he turned his back to the two "mamzerim." But, he also learned! Before his early education ended, he was translating Russian poetry into rhyming Hebrew.

On September 1, 1915, Lonya was running around outside as

best as he could wearing his father's boots, when the nanny called him in to tell him that he had a baby brother, Lyova. Lyova also had his encounter with the mohel, Moisei Behr Schupak (remember that name!) eight days later.

There were many occasions that the Frenkel family would be together in the forest with marvelous adventures associated each time. Like watching his mother swing an axe as well as any of the woodsmen.

--Or, like running with his Russian Wolfhound, chasing noises and having Stepan, the foreman, running after him just in case they really might have scared up a wolf or a bear.

--Or, like climbing to the top of a stack of logs to retrieve a bird's nest; climbing all the way back down again and, proudly presenting his hard-won treasure to his father. Moisei, after telling him how proud he was of Lonya's accomplishment, then asked him "If someone came and stole our house with our children in it, do you realize how unhappy we would be?" Needless to say, the nest was returned by Lonya to its original spot.

--Or, like the visit of a local band of Cossacks, who Moisei had befriended, whose *hetman's* (chieftain) horse was an irresistible temptation for Lonya to attempt mounting by climbing up the tail. The *hetman* averted a catastrophe by ordering the horse to lie down so that Lonya could mount him with ease.

--Or, like the little hatchet that Moisei had forged, which when struck against a tree would leave the impression of a  $\Phi$  (a Cyrillic "F") so that Lonya could find his way home if he happened to wander a bit too far.

--Or, like remembering that Stepan, their trusted foreman, who gladly would have given up his life for Moisei, requested a few days off to participate in a pogrom that had been publicized in a neighboring shtetl. Of course, he was not given the time off!

It was the third candle of Chanukah 1916, just before Lonya's sixth birthday, on one of these family gatherings in the woods of Szumsk, Moisei Frenkel's appendix burst and he died of peritonitis. On his deathbed, he had Pessya assure him that she would forever love and value his two sons by a previous marriage, Shura and Nahum, just as she would their two sons, Lonya and Lyova. She made that promise to him. He was buried in the Jewish cemetery in nearby Zhitomir.

Only a short time later, the Russian Borzoi wolfhound died.



*My father: Avrum Aaron, Lonya,  
Leonardo and Harry*

Lonya broke down completely lamenting, "First my father, then my dog, too!"

The *forever* that Pessya had promised did not last long. In October of 1917, the Bolshevik government, having won a cruel civil war that destroyed almost everything that Pessya and the four boys had, finally dispossessed them of whatever else remained and they found themselves in utter destitution; from riches to rags!

Lonya together with one of Moisei's brothers, became smugglers of fuel oil across the Polish border until both were arrested when Lonya was less than eight years of age. This convinced Pessya that her only recourse was to return to her father's house. Here she was told that they, too, were impoverished by the war. They recognized their obligation to her and HER sons but not to the two older boys who were strangers to them. Shura and Nahum were sent off to find asylum elsewhere. But that's another whole story, too.

Pessya, Lonya and Lyova moved in with her parents. It was hell! Lonya, because of the stress and strife of the past weeks, had lost his religious feelings and now found himself in an atmosphere of "You don't pray, you don't eat." In any case they did not have enough food to go around.

On one occasion, a Friday night, when challah was on the table, the grandfather slapped the hand of little Lyova for having reached for a second slice. Upon seeing this, Lonya raised a chair above his head, ran at his grandfather and told him that if he ever hit his baby brother again, he would kill him.

In 1921, two of Pessya's brothers had gotten to America via Shanghai and Seattle. They had settled in Chicago and sent money for their parents to emigrate. They told Pessya that she should get to Poland, to stay in communication with them and that they would, eventually, get her and her sons out, also.

She made arrangements with the help of Stepan to disguise themselves as peasants and to cross into Poland. The plan was for her to cross with Lonya first and then to return to bring Lyova over some six hours later. After all, Lonya was now ten and, surely, would be fine for that short a time. Because the fates play dirty tricks on people, Pessya and Lyova were caught and incarcerated for six days during which time Lonya was caught between frenzy, fear, despondency and lunacy. For the two years that they existed in Poland, Lonya, who knew Russian, Ukrainian, Hebrew and Yiddish, rebelliously refused to learn or to speak Polish.

In 1923, funds arrived from Uncle Joe in Chicago. He advised them that the best way for them to enter the United States would be on the Cuban quota. He told them that after one year in Cuba, they would be allowed immigrant status here.

They set off across Poland, Germany and Holland to Amsterdam, where they boarded a Dutch ship sailing to Vigo and Santander in Spain and then to Havana.

The crossing took three weeks during which Lonya gathered other memories. There was one occurrence that took place at the rail of the ship in the mid-Atlantic. One of the group commented about seeing nothing but so much water and another responded

"Bah, host a'mol gezeyn dem groiser Dnieper? (Have you ever seen the huge Dnieper [river]?)"

The second event was of much greater significance involving a Mr. Goldberg's and his lost wallet containing \$300. Just two days out of Havana, Lonya discovered this wallet and its contents and delivered it to Mr. Goldberg who offered him a reward. Lonya said "Please do not give me a reward but do us a great favor. My mother, my brother and I will be required to show that we have twenty dollars each in order to land at Havana and we do not have any money. If you will lend us sixty dollars until we get through customs, I will return it to you there."

As it was agreed, so was it done!

At Cuban customs, when he gave his name as Lonya, the official told him, "Here you will be called Leonardo." It was now May 1923.

#### LEONARDO

The one year required stay in Havana became seven. His mother became Paulina and his brother became Leon.

During his Cuban sojourn, Leonardo was a scholar, peddler, dress pleater, boxer, billiards hustler and cab driver. He continually reminded his mother that she had abandoned Shura and Nahum adding to the torment and guilt that she already bore. Meanwhile, Leonardo constantly attempted to locate them through HIAS and Red Cross agencies.

In 1929, Uncle Joe arranged a "political" marriage to one Mr. Rubin who was an American citizen, in order to bring Paulina into the U.S. One year later, she was able to apply for entry visas for her two minor children. In May 1930 they came to the U.S. aboard a United Fruit Company ship from Havana to Key West.

On May 18, 1930, Leonardo and Leon arrived in Chicago wearing Palm Beach suits and Panama hats. Snow was falling on that Spring day and both brothers agreed that, if they had the money, they would have returned to Cuba.

They were met at Union Depot and taken home to where their sophisticated, world-travelled Aunt Mary Davidson said "The name Avrum Aaron ain't American. Leonardo is Leonard which I don't like. 'arry, dot's a nice name. Call yourself 'arry!" And, Harry it was for the rest of his life.

#### HARRY

He married his second cousin, Clara Silverstein, on August 30, 1931. The officiating rabbi was Moishe Behr Schupak (remember him?) and his best man was Ben (Buzi) Rotstein.

On September 2, 1933, Harry and Clara's son — me — was born and eight days later, at my bris, the mohel was (you guessed it) Moishe Behr Schupak.

Harry Frenkel — also known as Avrum Aaron, Lonya and Leonardo Frenkel during his lifetime, but just "Dad" to my sister and me — lived his final years in California. On February 12, 1994, one month and one day after his 83rd birthday he came to visit us in Orlando and died in his grandson's arms at the baggage claim area of Orlando International Airport.

***Don't miss our next meeting — Bring a guest or potential member!***

# A Research Trip to Western Canada

by Gladys Friedman Paulin

On July 7, 1997, my sister, Sheila Friedman Reback, and I left Orlando for Winnipeg for a genealogical research trip to Western Canada (Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta).

Our paternal grandparents, Fannie and Eli Hershel (Pop) Friedman, had immigrated to the United States in 1905 with their two oldest children, including our father John. In 1907, Pop took his now family of five to Saskatchewan, following his father-in-law and two brothers-in-law, who had checked out an ad in the "Forverts" (*The Forward*) a year earlier about cheap land in Canada. For \$10.00 down a man could obtain a quarter section of land and it would be his, free and clear, after working and living on it for three years. Not only would he have that Homestead, but he would also qualify for another quarter section, or a preemption.

What a deal! Over the next several years, more than 21 of my relatives would take out such homesteads in Saskatchewan, becoming members of Jewish colonies in the Cupar and Lipton municipalities, north of Fort Qu'Appelle.

My Dad had twelve aunts and uncles, over 60 first cousins and even more second cousins. Many of them spent their early years in Canada on the farms. Those that didn't farm were constantly opening small stores in villages all over Saskatchewan. By 1930, only one family was still farming and five had returned to the United States. Today, we still have more cousins in Canada than here in the States.

While growing up, we had heard many stories of the cousins and of Dad's Uncle Pete, Uncle Nathan, Uncle Velvel and Uncle Kushe. But we had previously met only a few of their many descendants.

This trip was planned with several purposes in mind: to meet as many cousins as possible; to document family stories and *bubbe meises*; fill in vital statistics and make sure all our previously gathered information was accurate and up-to-date.

In April, I contacted Louis Kessler of the Genealogical Institute of the Jewish Historical Society of Western Canada (JHSWC) in Winnipeg to determine a good date to visit the Society and do some research. I was informed that they were moving to new quarters in June and not to visit until after the move. I called the Archivist and made a date for July 8.

Then I went on the Internet. Louis had earlier posted a note on Jewishgen that he had established a web page with full information on the holdings of the JHSWC (<http://www.concentric.net/~lkessler/jgems.shtml>). I took advantage of this and was astounded to find that Louis had posted pages of surnames to be found in many of the holdings, including their newspaper data base and several cemeteries.

I also checked out several other sites, including the

Saskatchewan Genealogical Society's library holdings, and information on the cities of Winnipeg, Regina and Saskatoon, our three primary research sites. And, of course, we sent a letter to every relative for whom we had an address in the three provinces we were visiting.

Our first stop was in Winnipeg where we stayed at the home of an 87 year old first cousin, once removed. This incredible woman had engineered our entire week in Winnipeg. She had arranged one large kosher catered family dinner (over 20 attendees) in the social hall of a local synagogue, drivers to the JHSWC, two more dinners, a cousin guide and driver to visit the four local Jewish cemeteries, etc. She herself picked us up at the airport and arranged for someone else to take us there when we left.

In addition to the relatives, we were delighted with the holdings of JHSWC. The staff went out of their way to be helpful, including unpacking two large cartons of audio tapes to find the eight that had been made by one of Dad's first cousins.

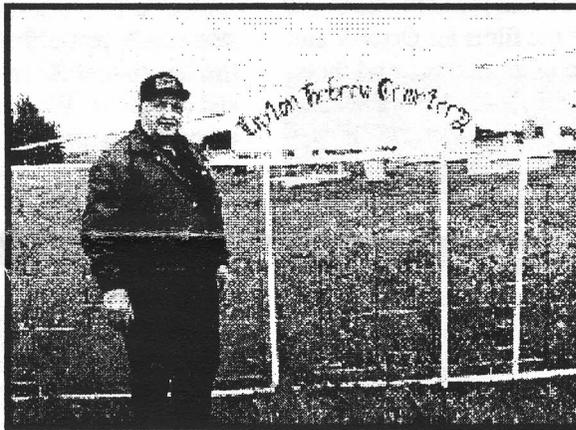
But we were absolutely amazed by their newspaper data base even though we had been aware that such a thing existed. This data base includes almost every surname to be found in articles in the *Israelite Press* from 1912 to the present. (It does not index every guest at a wedding

who may be listed in the original article, but does index members of the wedding party). The data base includes transliterated names from the many years when this newspaper (now the *Jewish Post and News*) and its predecessors were written entirely in Yiddish! And these newspapers are available both in hard copy and on microfilm.

Because of the fragility of many of the older copies, we were asked to use the microfilm at the Manitoba Legislative Library downtown, which we did on a following day. (These films are available from there on Inter Library Loan.)

Although neither Sheila nor I read Yiddish, we have taught ourselves to read all of our family names in that language. So we figured once we had the page number to look on finding the article would be a piece of cake. Well, it took us each three tries using a magnifying lens to locate the obituary of a great uncle; only to find it to be a major portion of a large newsy looking article in the lower center of the page. Only when we realized that that was not one article but all the news from another city were we able to find it. Sometimes the obvious is not so!

On to Regina where our first stop was the Saskatchewan Genealogy Society (SGS) Library full of goodies. From the mid



*The Lipton Hebrew cemetery*

1950's to 1970's, many of the small towns and organizations in Saskatchewan published commemorative and anniversary books. The SGS had a computer data base of the names included in these books. Sheila went through looking for all that she could find. Then she started with the books.

Meanwhile, I was going through all the Regina City Directories from 1912 to the mid 1920's when many of the former homesteaders were starting their businesses there. I found 4 groceries, each owned by a different relative, all opened the same year! And the story of a cousin with whom my Grandfather opened a second hand store, then left because they couldn't get along.... Well, I found the store, verified who that cousin, in fact, was, and discovered that he changed partners every year; two more relatives and then a stranger. (Actually, the relative was his wife.)

The next day, we went across the street to the Regina Public Library and its marvelous local history collection in The Prairie Room. More commemorative books and back copies of the Regina Leader, the local newspaper back to the beginning of the century.

Since the influenza epidemic of 1918 had proved to be tragic for our family, I decided to look through the films for October and November to gain some understanding of its effects. And there, in the issue dated November 5, I found the first documentary evidence of the existence and age of my uncle Peter, who was listed as having died the day before at the age of 5.

While in Regina, we also visited the Saskatchewan Provincial Archives where Sheila found some Department of Education teacher records which provided the towns of birth in Minsk gubernia for two of Dad's cousins. We also obtained some homestead records for family members. (We had obtained many of these several years ago through the LDS, but found the names of additional family homesteaders in family records at the JHSWC.)

Before we left Regina, we went to the Jewish Cemetery where we visited the graves of over 25 relatives; the rows of 1918 deaths made it obvious that the epidemic was a tragedy for the entire Jewish community.

From Regina we went to Saskatoon, where we visited family, the other half of the Saskatchewan Provincial Archives (which are split between the two campuses of the University of Saskatchewan in the two cities.)

We again visited the local history room of the public library. There we found an obituary index for the local newspaper and made copies from the microfilm. In Saskatoon the only synagogue is located in the Jewish Community Center and the only phone listings are for the JCC and for the Rabbi. I called the JCC, only to find the staff on vacation, so I called the Rabbi for directions to the Jewish cemetery. He graciously gave me directions but advised me that it was padlocked--so he gave me the combination over the phone!

When we got there, we found the chain twisted and the padlock on the inside; its numbers worn and difficult to read in the direct sunlight. After many minutes of frustration and a phone call to verify the combination, we finally used a magnifying glass and

got it right. We visited several family graves, although the sprinklers were on in one section so we could not get close to two of them.

Due to prior commitments, Sheila left for home from Saskatoon. I went on to Edmonton and Calgary where I met some more cousins and visited more cemeteries but did no other research. Of course one can not visit that part of the world without taking a tour of the spectacular Canadian Rockies, which I spent 5 days doing. They would be worth a trip all by themselves.

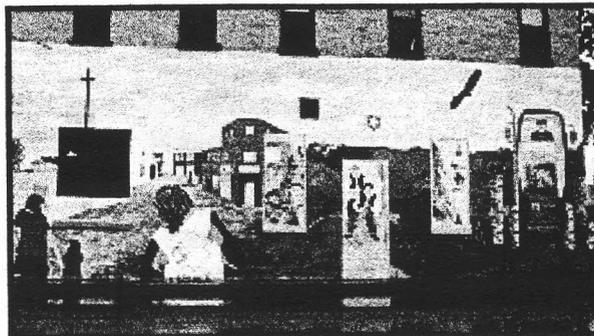
Everyone we met during our trip was most gracious and went out of their way to be helpful. But the most wonderful things happen serendipitously. We had rented a car to drive from Regina to Saskatoon because we wanted to visit the area where our family homesteaded. Particularly, we wished to visit the Lipton Hebrew Cemetery where our Great Grandparents, and other family, are buried. Although we had the location of the cemetery-- by section number, we needed directions since we understood it was on a back farm road.

It had been drizzling for a few hours when we arrived in Lipton, a tiny community with grain elevators, a hotel, a few stores and a post office. We stopped at the Post Office to find out the location of the municipal office so we could get a local map and directions. We were advised that the office was closed. I then asked the postmistress if she could give us directions to the cemetery. She said she could, then glanced past me out the window and said: "Oh, here comes Mr. Klisowsky. He's the expert on the Jewish cemetery. You should ask him."

He was coming in to get his mail. So I went out and introduced myself, mentioning the names of my family, and repeated what I had been told. He asked what I wanted to know and I said I needed directions. "Where's your car?" he asked. I pointed and he said "Let's go."

Not only did he direct us to the Cemetery, but on the way, Sheila interviewed him. He is 82 years old and some of our cousins had been his classmates! He told us stories of them as students and what several others were like. Upon being questioned, he said his school, *Tiferes Israel*, had had 49 students, of whom 44 were Jewish.

Just before we got to the cemetery, the rain stopped. Mr. Klisowsky opened the gate and walked us through. He told us who was buried in some of the graves which had no markers and stories of others. We drove him back to town, where no Jews live today; he refused any lunch or other compensation.



*The hotel mural showing the Star of David*

As we turned to leave, we noticed a fresh looking mural on the side of the hotel. It was a farm scene, harvesting the hay. In the middle of the sky was painted a royal blue Star of David in remembrance of the former Jewish colony.

# The Rapkin Family Reunion

by Shirley Weiss Michael

My sister-in-law, Elaine Jaffe, has talked about getting all the cousins together from her mother's side of the family for a long time. Except for one aunt, who is 91 now, all that's left are cousins. There never has been a reunion of any kind. Actually many of the cousins never met each other. The original family came from Cleveland and now they're spread out all across the U.S.A.

Since Elaine is already 74, she felt if she didn't do it now, it may never be done. Since my family has had several reunions, she asked advice on how to organize an event that may become pretty large, like about 50 to 60 people.

Since she lived on the outskirts of Washington, D.C., she felt her location for a reunion would be excellent, because there was so much to do besides the actual reunion activities. When I talked to her, she stressed the importance of outside activities. From my personal point of view, I'm not sure the outside activities are all that important.

The initial step was setting a date far enough away to allow people to organize their time, and secondly, to allow her to make all the arrangements. Her first flyer went out about six months in advance to alert people of the potential reunion. I know in addition to the flyer she made many personal phone calls. There were a number of cousins that she had no way to make contact with since they had relocated and were basically silent with the rest of the family. Once the flyer went out, many of the cousins began filling her in with new phone numbers and addresses. One cousin was actually located through a search engine on the Internet.

Her plans for the reunion were: first, a casually dressed dinner on Friday at a hotel convenient to a Metro (subway) stop. Most everyone showed up for the dinner, although there were a few who did not arrive until Saturday.

Not everyone had rooms at the hotel because some were able to stay with family and friends. My husband, Al, whose family represented the reunion, saw many cousins he had never met before. The initial greetings were pretty emotional. Photos were being taken constantly.

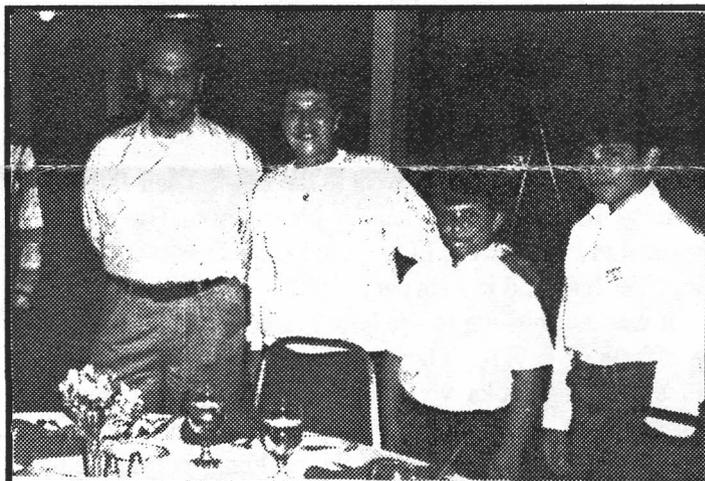
Second, the scheduled events during the day on Saturday were sightseeing in Washington and an open house at Elaine's for anyone to attend that didn't have other plans. Seemed like almost everyone found time to spend at her house. As it turned out all those who planned on doing some sightseeing decided not to go. Instead they all stayed to be with the family. There was lot of food and lots of fun all day long.

Third, Saturday night was a formal dress-up dinner at the

hotel. This time everyone was there. Elaine had a special reunion cake made for the occasion.

Last was brunch on Sunday, which was back at the hotel. It lasted for hours. By late afternoon many of the attendees were heading back to airports, etc. There were a total of 54 who attended. Coming from California, New York, Virginia, Connecticut, Georgia, Maryland, Michigan, New Mexico, North Carolina, and, of course, Florida.

A personal view of the reunion ... my husband, who normally is a stoic type person, showed considerable emotion when he first saw his oldest cousin from Detroit, who, despite being sickly, made the trip to Washington. In addition he met for the first time the younger brother of his favorite cousin, his cousin having passed away when he was 50 years old. I



*Shirley Michael with her nephew and two grandsons at the reunion*

think the physical similarities and style of the younger brother brought back a rush of memories. They promised each other they would open a line of conversation to better acquaint themselves.

Before everyone left, our cousin, Scott from Georgia, announced that the next reunion will be in two years in Atlanta.

We all thanked Elaine so much for putting in so much time and effort to make this wonderful reunion happen. It's an event we will all remember forever.

# Genealogical Success: A Trip to Germany and Austria

by: Jay Schleichkorn

It's often been said that "travel broadens one's mind." I agree and I can now attest to the fact that travel also increases opportunities to promote one's interest in family roots as well as advancing genealogical projects. Case in point....

My wife, Marianne, and I returned Saturday night (July 12) from a 19 day trip to Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Lichtenstein. We joined 23 people in Frankfurt, Germany on a large Mercedes touring coach organized by Grand European Tours.

Before the tour actually started on June 27 in Frankfurt, Marianne, her sister Ellen, and I arrived in that city on Tuesday June 24. We came a few days early early in order to revisit their childhood homes and environs in Frankfurt and Geissen. It was a very difficult decision to go back to a country that brought only hardships, but after 58 years they wanted to see the changes.

For some background, you should know that the two sisters left Frankfurt in August 1939 on a Kindertransport to England. Their parents made a decision at the time to send them out of the country in order to save their lives. They were without their parents for seven years in a school near London. In March 1947 the two girls went to the USA. Their father left Germany for Cuba and then to New York. Their mother remained in Frankfurt in hiding until the war ended when she joined her husband in February 1947.

It was astonishing to see how Frankfurt recovered from the effects of WWII. There are many modern skyscrapers and everything looks very prosperous. Making our own walking tour, we easily found their former home on Savignystrasse. The owner of the building, noting we took photos, spoke to us. He seemed genuinely interested in the story of the two "refugees" and invited us into his apartment located one floor below where the girls lived. Marianne and Ellen noted the entrance to the building hadn't changed.

From there we walked to their old Jewish school (The Philanthropin). The buildings are still in very good condition and now serve as a music school operated by the City of Frankfurt. A caretaker welcomed us and seemed to be intrigued by the visit from the former students.

We also visited the West End Synagogue. Marianne remembered the damage from November 9-10, 1938, Kristallnacht. Today it resembles a fortress.

The next day we took a train to Geissen (a university town), where the sisters were born. We found three places of interest. One, their former home, now houses a bank. The other was the site of their father's business, and the third was an apartment house near the University. So much has been rebuilt in both cities. Since I wasn't born overseas and am

from New York I really enjoyed the nostalgic moments and shared the emotional experiences with them.

The bus tour took us to Baden-Baden, Heidelberg, Lucerne, Geneva, Montreaux, Zermatt, St. Moritz, Innsbruck and Vienna. With two days in Lucerne, we left the group for an afternoon and took an hour-train ride to Zurich to visit a first cousin to Marianne and Ellen. She is 92 and was so pleased to see us all.

Three days were allotted to Vienna and that is where my genealogical search began. While the tour group was sightseeing, I went to the Israelitsche Kultusgemeinde. Thanks to Harry Katzman, a member of our Society and his genealogical knowledge, I received the address of the record center. I wrote the office in April and had a reply indicating that "the Schleichkorn name is really singular!" I took that to mean it was unusual. The letter mentioned records were available on my family members. I knew definitely that somehow on this tour, I would have to find that office.

A phone call to the office gave me the time for an appointment to meet the director of records. Finding the building was not difficult as the "U-bahn" (subway) was very convenient.

After going through a security check, I was allowed into the Jewish facility to meet with Mrs. Weiss of the Records Department. In one large metal cabinet, there were about 25 volumes of birth records. I noticed the dates on the old books with worn spines were from 1890 through 1915. Mrs. Weiss was prepared for my visit and based on my previous correspondence she brought out specific volumes. The books had information about my grandfather Jacob, his wife Katherine, and all their children. I saw the actual birth records for Samuel, Henrietta, Henry, Hermine, Herman, Irma, Josephine and Arthur, all carefully written and spread across two pages in large leather bound volumes set up by years. What a sense of discovery I had!

I can now say and confirm the fact that my father (Heinrich/Henry) was born in Vienna on September 16, 1885. Birthdates of my father's brothers and sisters (all my uncles and aunts) were also confirmed.

The record shows my grandfather Jacob came from Galicia (probably Czarny Dunajec) and his wife, Katherine Kohn came from Trnava, Moravia. It also listed their parents (my great-grandparents). Jacob's father was Sholmo or Solomon and he married Chaje Sara (No last name was given). Chaje is new name for me as I had Rosalie Schwartz as his wife, taken from Jacob's death certificate where his parent's names were listed. Both died before Jacob and Katherine were married in 1879 Vienna.

Katherine's father was Gerson Kohn, an innkeeper, and her mother was Resi Freud. Freud is a new name on my Family Tree and opens another area for research.

What was very interesting and a new genealogical fact is that Jacob and Katherine had another child who was unknown to me. Listed was Hermine, born 22 April 1882. She died at age 5 of smallpox on June 2, 1887. Now I understand why another son was later named Herman, born in 1888.

I knew about another child, Irma, but didn't have any details except that she was listed on the ship manifest going to New York in November 1900 as being ten years old. The Viennese records confirm that she was born June 6, 1890. She apparently died at a young age in New York. I have not been able to find the day of death but it probably was before March 1913. I base that on that fact that a cousin was born then and named Irma, probably following the tradition of naming a newborn after a deceased relative. One new clue I found was a notation in the Vienna record indicating the Schleichkorn family asked for a copy of Irma's birth certificate in January 1905 when they were in New York City. Makes me think she may have died around that time. That will require some additional research in the New York records.

I also showed Mrs. Weiss a photo of a family group labeled "Great Uncle Leopold Neuman, son and wife". It was among my Dad's papers. I have to assume the woman was a Schleichkorn and perhaps a sister to my grandfather. I also had an envelope addressed to my father and sent by Leopold Neumann from Vienna September 21, 1940, censored by the Nazis.

Mrs. Weiss checked the deportation records and address on the envelope. Much to my surprise there was a Leopold Neumann, born July 2, 1867 who was sent to Theresienstadt on June 28, 1942 and then on to Minsk three months later on September 29. There is no mention of his wife or son.

Mrs. Weiss then decided to check the deportation file for any Schleichkorns. She found a card for Fanny Schleichkorn, born 13 November 1864, who was sent to Theresienstadt on September 10, 1942, and also to Minsk in September 29.

I don't know if she was a relative but genealogically speaking, she could have been my grandfather's sister. The card-file certainly piqued my interest.

In order to verify the information, on July 24 I sent an e-mail to the Theresienstadt Martyrs Remembrance

Association located in Givat Chaim-Ichud, Israel, asking if any information was available on Fanny Schleichkorn or Leopold Neumann.

By August 14, I received a response. Leopold Neuman left Theresienstadt on Transport #Bs-216 on September 29, 1942; but he did not go to Minsk; he was sent to Treblinka. He was 75 years old.

Fanny Schleichkorn was also sent to Treblinka on Transport # Bs-963, on September 29, 1942. She was 78 years old.

In the letter from the Remembrance Association, it stated, "In Treblinka all the new arrivals were gassed instantly except some younger people whose work it was to empty the gas chambers and bury the bodies until they met the same fate as others." I shared this information with one of my "genealogical relatives", Rochelle Schwartz of San Mateo, Calif., (whose grandmother was Anna Schleichkorn). She recently informed me that "between 1941 and 1945, it was common to deport people from Terezin to elsewhere to be shot. Theresienstadt was not an extermination camp and they were more often sent from there to Auschwitz for that purpose."

My genealogical research will now take another turn as I seek more information on Fanny and Leopold through the Vienna City Archives (Stadtarchiv, Wien).

In Vienna we saw the Opera House, attended two concerts featuring Mozart and Strauss music, had the usual chocolates and apple strudel with hot vanilla sauce as well as weiner schnitzel in a famous restaurant.

Marianne, Ellen and I, on our own, went to the Jewish Museum which was quite unique. The third floor has a huge glass-enclosed vault-like area with all kinds of religious artifacts, many of which were looted and returned. You couldn't help but think of what family may have owned much of the beautiful items and who never have been able to reclaim them.

After Vienna, the tour went to Salzburg and Munich.

When our group was in Munich, Marianne and I took a short train ride to the city of Dachau. From the station we had a cab take us to the camp. It was a cloudy day which and added to the sight of the depressing huge facility. Needless to say it was a somber visit, but very interesting. And it was so close to the town that I can't believe the local people didn't know what was going on!



*Mrs. Weiss in Vienna searching for Schleichkorn records*

*(Continued from the previous page)*

Now that our travels are over, I can definitely say it was a well-planned trip. I was especially pleased with the genealogical information I was able to obtain. With all the planning for weeks before departure, it's now just a memory.

The next projects will involve preparing photo albums from 17 rolls of film and continuing my genealogical search. And while I enjoyed all the historic sights and scenery, I must confess the personal highlight of the trip was finding the genealogical records of my family in Vienna. Seeing the actual historical material is what makes genealogy so exciting!

## **CAUTION! WARNING!**

### **TO ALL GENEALOGISTS!**

**Disease is running rampant, and is especially contagious among genealogists world-wide**

#### THE SYMPTONS:

1. Continual complaint as to need for names, dates and places.
2. Patient has a blank expression, sometimes deaf to spouse and children.
3. Has no taste for work of any kind, except feverishly looking through records at libraries and courthouses.
4. Has compulsion to write letters.
5. Swears at mailman when he doesn't leave mail.
6. Frequents strange places such as cemetaries, ruins and remote desolate country towns.
7. Makes secret night calls, hides the telephone bills from spouse and mumbles to him/herself.
8. Sometimes results in cries of exultation upon obtaining certain information, described by many as a 'genealogical orgasm.'
9. Has strange faraway look in eyes.

#### TREATMENT:

1. Medication is useless. Though disease is not fatal, it gets progressively worse.
2. Patient should attend family history classes, subscribe to genealogical magazines and be given a quiet corner in the house where he/she can be alone.
3. The unusual nature of the disease is ....

**The sicker the patient gets,  
the more he/she enjoys it!!!!**

*Wishing you all*

*a most healthy, prosperous, productive*

*and*

**HAPPY NEW YEAR**

**1997 - 5758**

### *Some final words from your editor ...*

It is time to hand over the blue pencil and scissors to someone else. After seven years of acting as editor of this journal, *ETZ CHAIM* needs new blood, new life, some new ideas and originality.

Don't get me wrong. I have thoroughly enjoyed the job. It has given me tons of insight into the world-wide world of Jewish genealogy. It has increased my own knowledge tremendously. And for this I am grateful.

I am even more grateful for the opportunity it has given me to meet such a wonderful group of comrades, both here in Orlando and at the various newsletter sessions I've been a part of at the JGS Summer Seminars. It is from other people that you learn about life, both the living and those who have passed on.

So I look back on those past seven years as a wonderful part of my life ... interacting with people in an avocation I've come to love — Jewish genealogy.

I certainly expect my successor to innovate his or her own talents in coming issues, to make changes, major or minor, to put his or her own ideas to work. And I have confidence that *ETZ CHAIM* will take on a new and more forward step in our world of Jewish genealogy.

I hope to continue to contribute to our news-letter. I just hope the new editor will look with favor upon my contributions and will look askance at the typos and sentence structure and go easy with the cutting knife.

I wish continued success for *ETZ CHAIM*, its new headmaster, and our young, but growing Society.

Thank you, dear friends, for allowing me the opportunities of the past years. May each of you find that your past will always be a part of your future.

— GENE STARN

## Newsletters are great; Cleveland's *KOL* tops 'em all

by Gladys Paulin, JGSGO Librarian

The JGSGO Library regularly receives many periodicals, among which are the newsletters of other Jewish Genealogical Societies. They send us their newsletter in exchange for ours. Each issue of Etz Chaim lists articles from some of these newsletters. This listing is by no means a complete list of the wonderful information published in these newsletters. Your librarian has merely provided the Editor with a list of those articles deemed to be of interest to the greatest number of our readers.

If any of your family lived in Boston, Washington, Los Angeles, Toronto, etc it is in your best interest to take a little time in our library to review the newsletters from that area. It is impossible for us to print all the wonderful information we receive. One newsletter used to try to do that.

A reader used to be able to go through the Cleveland *KOL* and be fairly certain that nothing of value was missed. That single newsletter used to duplicate almost all of the valuable information it received. On top of reprinting others' news, the Cleveland JGS also produced much unique local information of their own.

Well, no more. The last few issues have duplicated little of what can be found in the other newsletters.

The *Kol* is still about 3/4" thick and jammed with information. But almost all of it is now unique. A quick look at the indexes of the last three issues (each over 240 pages) reveals the following articles, among

many others (each index is at least a page long):

- ◆ Today's Hidden Jews in Poland
- ◆ Cunard Archives
- ◆ REIPP (Russian Era Indexing of Poland Project)
- ◆ Ohio Death Certificate Form
- ◆ History of National Council of Women [Cleveland]
- ◆ Jews in Small Towns by Howard Epstein [includes a complete list of all towns covered]
- ◆ New Mexico's Sephardim: Uncovering Jewish Roots
- ◆ Euclid Avenue Temple Confirmation program
- ◆ Computers and Genealogy
- ◆ Excerpts from Cleveland and its Environs
- ◆ Author Mary Gordon Connects with Her Past
- ◆ Latvia Survivors List
- ◆ Burial List, Beth Abraham Jewish Cemetery#48, Zanesville, OH
- ◆ Pike County's (Missouri) Jewish Community
- ◆ Migration & Immigration to Cleveland
- ◆ Presov Jewish community
- ◆ Cleveland Jewish Archives
- ◆ Stone Setting Notices (1919-1923)
- ◆ Searching for Austria Town's Jewish Survivors
- ◆ Glenville Kid Stuff, 1925-1939

The above are all major articles. Each issue is also filled with blurbs, research tips, records updates, news of seminars, etc.

**CHECK IT OUT! SPEND SOME TIME IN THE LIBRARY!**

## A Gentle Reminder About Membership Renewal

Just in case the DUES NOTICE that you received in the mail, or at one of our meetings is misfiled or misplaced, use the schedule below to send in your payment for membership renewal. Dues are payable September 1st. If you remitted dues after June 15, 1997, you are fully paid for the 1997-98 fiscal year.

- \$100. . . . . Patron
- 50. . . . . Sponsor
- 20. . . . . Individual/Family (JCC member)
- 25. . . . . Individual/Family (non-JCC member)
- 15. . . . . Out-of-Town (more than 50 miles)

Please mail your dues to: Treasurer, JGSGO, P.O.Box 941332, Maitland, FL 32794-1332

If you have any questions about membership, please contact Sonia or Harold Sternberger at 407/239-4167, or

Harold449@juno.com      Sonishine@juno.com

(They are dears to work with when you need information.)

Items of interest you'll find in the latest issues of

## JGS Quarterlies

Copies may be found in our genealogy library  
in the Holocaust Center

The Quarterly journals of all JGSes from around the world, as well as the Special Interest Group (SIG) publications and AVOTAYNU, the International Review of Jewish Genealogy, are kept on file in our library in the Holocaust Center.

All of these journals have information of interest to all genealogists depending, of course, upon their own interests, but the articles listed below are deemed to be of special interest to our readers.

### Morasha - Illinois - Winter 1996-97

Jewish Life in Czarist Russia

### Chronicles - Philadelphia - Spring 1997

Trace Ancestors with Newspapers

### Dorot - New York - Summer 1996

New York Resources Update  
New York Vital Records

### Discovery - San Diego - Winter 1997

Using Maps and Gazetteers in Jewish Genealogy

### Shemot - London - December 1996

The Inquisition and Genealogy  
Some Records of Sephardi Addresses

### Mass-Pocha - Boston - Spring 1997

Reviskii Skaska [Russian tax censuses of Jews]  
Project Mitzvah

### Mishpacha - Washington, DC - Winter 1997

Ireland and the Jews

### Roots Key - Los Angeles - Winter and Spring

1997 (2)

Research Techniques for Poland  
Your Ancestor's Cemetery: Where to Find it and What  
to do When You're There

### Shem Tov - Toronto - June 1997

How to Obtain Ontario Vital Statistics Records

### Sharsheret Hadorot - Israel - February 1997 &

June 1997

The Jews of Bukhara  
Portugese Jews on the Caribbean and the Guineas  
List of Jewish Museums in Europe

### Taldot (formerly Bolatin) - Argentina - December

1996 & July 1997

Jewish Colonies in Entre Rios  
List of Jewish Cemeteries in Buenos Aires  
Several articles on Moisesville

### The Kosher Koala - Australia - June 1997

List of Holocaust Survivors who arrived September  
1947 aboard S.S. Sagittaire



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